2020-21 High School Summer Reading

Materials
The all-school summer reading book is The Collected Works of Billy the Kid (2008) by Michael Ondaatje and the complete third season of the historical podcast on the life of Billy the Kid entitled Infamous America, episodes one through ten. Additionally, you will read one book from the short summer reading list (below).

Important Directions
Reading the all-school summer book is an essential part of the St. Francis experience. The entire faculty, staff, and all students will read this novel. Represent yourself well by reading and writing thoughtfully. Give yourself adequate time to reflect and compose thorough responses to the reading. Don’t save this project until the last minute.

Be sure to bring The Collected Works of Billy the Kid to class and share your Google doc with your English teacher by the first day of school. It will be late if you don’t, automatically leaving you with a failing grade.

Summer Reading List 2020-21
In addition to the all-school summer reading, all students (except those reading a book for an AP course, as described below) must read one book from this list.

Emma (1815) by Jane Austen
The Piano Lesson (1990) by August Wilson
Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937) by Zora Neale Hurston
Othello (1603) by William Shakespeare

Students Assigned a Text for a Non-English AP Class
If you are reading a book for an AP course summer assignment, that counts as your second book. However, instead of writing about this second book for your English class, you will address an additional question about The Collected Works of Billy the Kid (a total of two responses on this text). AP English Literature students should follow the summer assignment given by their instructor.
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Writing Requirements
Select one essay prompt under each heading (one for the all-school and one for your chosen second book; if the AP text is your second book, choose two essay prompts about the all-school book). Write 6-8 pages (3-4 pages per essay) in a Google doc shared with your English teacher.

Use Garamond, 12 point, in a double-spaced document with one-inch margins, MLA formatted citations. Title the document Summer Reading 2020 [Your last name].

2020 Summer Reading Prompts
Below are the prompts for your summer reading writing assignment. Remember, choose one about the novel and one about the other required summer reading text (total of two), except if you are reading a book for an AP course for your second text, in which case you choose two about The Collected Works of Billy the Kid. Your essays should cite instances from the texts to analyze and illustrate your points.

A Proviso
This is a work of mixed genre, consisting of poetry, prose, and photography. Do not be alarmed by its hybridity; it’s still one cohesive book with a narrative—even if that narrative isn’t presented as linear. Read the book from cover to cover. Neither jump around nor read the pieces out of sequence. Believe it or not, a lot of thought went into the book’s order by both the writer and publisher. Remember: form is an extension of meaning. So, accept the text for what it is, yet question: How are the various parts of the work interconnected? What does the form of the work say about its content?

Prompts for The Collected Works of Billy the Kid by Michael Ondaatje
1) What is a theme (some abstract idea related to the text’s subject, e.g. violence, hero vs. antihero) that you perceive operating in the narrative and what motifs (any repeated concrete element in a literary work, e.g. food imagery or depictions of buildings) are being used to communicate that theme?
2) How are the settings in the Ondaatje text particularly important for communicating some meaning about the text or its characters/voices?
3) After reading the Ondaatje book and listening to the podcast, who is Billy the Kid? What does he mean as an historical American hero?
4) How does the text’s form affect its narrative?
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Prompts for the additional summer reading text

5) What is a theme (some abstract idea related to the text’s subject, e.g. refusal or betrayal) that you perceive operating in the narrative and what motifs (any repeated concrete element in a literary work, e.g. food imagery or depictions of buildings) are being used to communicate that theme?

6) What types of symbolism do you find in this text? What do these objects really represent? How do characters react to and interact with these symbolic objects?

7) Does the book address broader social issues? Does the author take a stance, for example, the plight of the impoverished or the abuse of women? How is a particular culture or subculture portrayed?